SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH IMPACT AND PUBLIC POLICY:

Lessons from the Participation and Public Policy Program

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Executive Summary

1) This report identifies and analyzes some important lessons offered by three projects supported through the Participation and Public Policy experimental program (PPP) of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), in regard to the relationship between *power* and *social science research impact*. More specifically, this report explores the contextual political factors that conditioned the impact of the results of the following projects: Representative Institutions and Public Policy in Argentina (3-P87-0313); Participation and Public Policy in Costa Rica (3-P-87-1053); and, Participation and Local Governments in Cuba (3-P-87-1053).

2) The three projects under consideration show that *research impact is not simply a technical, methodological or theoretical problem that demands technical, methodological or theoretical solutions*. Discussions about social science research impact, especially public policy oriented research, must take into consideration the fact that research takes place within structures of power relations. Furthermore, the fact that social science theory and research have the capacity not simply to explain but also to affect these power structures makes it essential for institutions like the IDRC to understand that researchers have an important degree of moral and social responsibility in regard to the relationship between their intellectual work and the power structures that they analyze.

3) The double function of social science knowledge as *explanation* of social reality and as a *social influence* with the capacity to change the very reality that it is trying to explain allows us to distinguish between at least two different operational standards that can be used to assess the value and significance of social science research: *theoretical relevancy* and *practical utility*.
By *theoretical relevancy* we mean the capacity for social science research to articulate historically authentic, and scientifically valid and legitimate explanations and interpretations of social phenomena. By *practical utility*, we mean the capacity for social science research to shape the way in which society functions. Impact, in the IDRC, is predominantly assessed in terms of *practical utility*.

4) The results of the three projects reviewed in this report did not manage to visibly affect the policy and decision making processes that they studied. The lack of *practical utility* in these three cases was not the result of improper or inadequate research designs, project implementation problems or any other technical difficulty. The lack of *practical utility* in the cases under consideration can only be explained by understanding the critical nature of the research results generated by this project, and the incongruent relationship between existing power structures and the arguments and conclusions presented by the researchers. The three projects under consideration also show how the personal values of researchers condition the possibilities for research results to achieve *practical utility*.

5) Globalization is increasingly conditioning the power structures within which social science research takes place. More and more, the normative frameworks generated by transnational financial organizations condition the role of the state and the research agenda of Latin American countries. It is becoming increasingly difficult to do research outside the very limited framework established by the neo-liberal agenda of governments.

6) In this sense it is important to point to a trend identified by researchers throughout the region: the tendency for social science researchers to work as government consultants, very often with the support of transnational financial organizations. This has certainly created a more instrumental and pragmatic research agenda throughout the continent. While this agenda might increase the *practical utility* of social science research, it does nothing to secure its *theoretical relevancy*

7) The IDRC's search for new ways of assessing social science research impact cannot avoid confronting the issue of politics, power and social responsibility. The process whereby social knowledge creates social reality is mediated by power and values. This is why the IDRC's conceptual and operational definition of *research impact* should be enlarged to take into consideration the complex nature of the relationship between social science research and social reality. In other words, *the concept of impact should be defined by the IDRC as the capacity for social science research to produce theoretically relevant and/or useful results.*

8) In operational terms, this could be translated into the

allocation of a percentage of the budget used by the IDRC to support social science research for projects that attempt to generate relevant results, even if the practical utility of these results is low. This type of support is compatible with the IDRC's mission to support research for development purposes. The meaning of development is socially determined and *theoretically relevant* social science research should actively participate in its definition.

Introduction

This report is a contribution to the "Impact Assessment of the IDRC Public Goods and Policy Projects." The central objective of this assessment is "to deepen understanding of how development research...contributes to social and economic development in the Third World...by exploring the ways in which the IDRC's own work has had an impact, and perhaps failed to have an impact, on this process." (IDRC, 1997a, p. 1).

The key concern behind the IDRC's assessment of its own experience is "research impact." The formal rationale of this assessment indicates that "it is important for the IDRC to understand the impact of the research it supports: to know better the kind of influence it is having on the development agenda and research capacity of developing countries; to understand better how impact assessment can be done for development research; to use the accumulated knowledge to improve its own practice; and to justify the validity, confirm the quality and raise the profile of its work to the Canadian public" (IDRC, 1997a, p.1).

While recognizing the complexity of development research, its outcomes, implications, and consequences, the IDRC's central concern is with the utilization of research results:

> In the 1980s, questions of research utilization were more prominent and the Centre's documents made explicit its fundamental dilemma: a mandate which required research to foster equitable and sustainable development, but real limitations on the degree of influence it could exert over such results (IDRC, 1997a, p. 2).

With these preoccupations in mind the IDRC launched in 1997 an assessment of its own experience "to provide evidence of the impacts previous types of project design and application emphases have produced, and a synthesis of lessons learned as input to

future policy and design decisions as well as input to how we can best assess and enhance the IDRC's contribution to impact" (IDRC, 1997a, p. 2).

The present report identifies and analyzes some important lessons offered by three projects supported through the Participation and Public Policy Program (PPP), in regard to the relationship between *power* and *social science research impact*.[1] More specifically, this report analyzes the contextual political factors that conditioned the impact of the results of the following projects: Representative Institutions and Public Policy in Argentina (3-P87-0313); Participation and Public Policy in Costa Rica (3-P-87-1053); and, Participation and Local Governments in Cuba (3-P-87-1053).[2]

The experience of these projects can provide the IDRC not only with answers to the questions included in the terms of reference and the concept paper of its "impact assessment" study

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[1]A study conducted by the author of the PPP Program in 1993 was designed to explore and assess the basic theoretical rationale of this experience. The objective of the 1993 evaluation was not to extract lessons concerning the relationship between power, research and impact. Rather, the 1993 study concentrated its attention on the analysis of the relationship between domestic and external forces in the formulation of public policies. The study argued that the original design of the PPP Program concentrated excessively on the domestic dimension of policy making and paid little attention to external variables.

[2]This report is based on a) the answers provided by the leaders of these projects to a questionnaire provided by the author (see annex A); b) the author's participation in the formulation and implementation of the PPP Program between 1986-1988; the author's evaluation of the Participation and Public Policy Program (PPP)in 1993 (see Pérez, 1993); analysis of relevant documents pertaining the "Impact Assessment of IDRC Public Goods and Policy Projects"; analysis of the written products of three projects supported by the IDRC through the Participation and Public Policy Program; and relevant literature on the issue of social science research and impact.

but also, with ideas and arguments that the Centre could use to enrich the meaning and significance of the very questions that it needs to ask itself and others in order to understand, explain and improve its own work and performance.

The three projects under consideration show that *research impact is not simply a technical, methodological or theoretical problem that demands technical, methodological or theoretical solutions.* Discussions about social science research impact, especially public policy oriented research, must take into consideration the fact that research takes place within structures of power relations. Furthermore, the fact that social science theory and research have the capacity not simply to explain but also to affect these power structures makes it essential for institutions like the IDRC to understand that researchers have an important degree of moral and social responsibility in regard to the relationship between their intellectual work and the power structures that they analyze.

Therefore, the IDRC's search for new ways of assessing social science research impact cannot avoid confronting the issue of politics, power and social responsibility. This report confronts these issues directly using the experience of the Public Policy and Participation Program (PPP).

What happens when researchers' values prevent them from manipulating their research objectives and methodologies to comply with the requirements of existing power structures and dominant social values? What happens when there is no congruency between research results and recommendations and the interests that shape existing power structures? What happens when research projects produce theoretically relevant social science knowledge that is not compatible with the interests and priorities defended by the state and dominant social institutions? What happens when the theoretical relevancy of research conflicts with its capacity

to be useful and practical? These are some of the key questions that will be explored through this report.

The report is divided into five sections. Section I offers an analysis of the basic assumptions that have guided the IDRC's recent exploration of the issue of research impact. Section II presents a summary of the main objectives, arguments and conclusions of the three projects selected for this study. Section III identifies and discusses some key lessons about research, power and social responsibility extracted from the selected case studies. Section IV explores the impact of globalization on the power structures that influence social science research in Latin America. Finally, section V discusses some of the implications of this study for the IDRC.

I. The Search for Research Impact in the IDRC

The "Impact Assessment of the IDRC Public Goods and Policy Projects" is a continuation of the Centre's effort to understand and establish the consequences of the research activities that it supports. The organization of the PPP in 1986 was, to a large extent, an attempt to confront institutional questions in regard to the impact of the research activities supported by the Centre. The Program and Policy Review VIII (1987/88-1990/91), stated that:

> The Board's desire for increased emphasis on implementation of research results is shared by Centre management. Greater efforts should be made to ensure that promising technologies or approaches resulting from Centre-supported work are followed through to introduction and implementation (IDRC, 1986).

The basic rationale that justified the organization of the PPP Program was captured in two premises that reflect the IDRC's concerns in regard to the impact of the research activities that

it supported:

a) The capacity and willingness of public institutions to formulate and implement public policies is limited by political and bureaucratic factors. Consequently, research projects that attempt to have a maximum early impact should realistically ascertain the political organizational and administrative environment to which their recommendations pertain.

b) The capacity or willingness of social institutions to formulate and implement policies that address the problems of the most disadvantaged social groups of developing countries largely depends on the capacity of these groups to influence the process of policy formulation and implementation. The influence of these groups is made effective through a variety of mechanisms of political representation such as political parties, unions, interest groups, etc. (IDRC, 1986).

Based on these premises, the Participation and Public Policy Program was established to support research projects that:

a) analyze the political and administrative factors that condition the processes of formulation and implementation of specific public policies;

b) identify political and administrative strategies which maximize the opportunities for research results to have an impact on the process of formulation and implementation of public policies with the objective of improving the distribution of social resources; and,

c) explore the possibilities of facilitating the participation of the most disadvantaged sectors of developing countries in the process of formulation and implementation of public policies (See IDRC, 1986).

The three projects that are analyzed in this report dealt with these three objectives, even though each project balanced them in different ways. From this perspective, it is possible to argue that the project "Representative Institutions and Public Policy in Argentina" directly addressed objective (a) of the PPP Program by concentrating its attention on the analysis of the role of economic corporations in the formulation of public policy in

Argentina during the government of Raúl Alfonsín between 1983 and 1989. The project "Participation and Public Policy in Costa Rica" addressed objective (b) of the PPP Program by concentrating its attention on the identification of political strategies to enhance the impact of community organizations in the struggle for housing in Costa Rica during the 1980s. The project "Participation and Local Governments in Cuba", dealt more directly with objective (c) of the PPP Program by exploring the possibilities of democratizing the functioning of local governments in Cuba during the 1980s.

Both the PPP Program and the "Impact Assessment of IDRC Public Goods and Policy Projects", as efforts to explore the possibility of enhancing the impact of the research activities supported by the Centre, have taken place on the basis of some explicit and implicit assumptions about the nature of social science research that need to be examined.

Postulated and Background Assumptions

The theoretical rationale used by organizations to explain and justify their activities and operations contain what Alvin Gouldner call "postulations" and "background assumptions." Postulations are explicitly formulated statements that express a particular understanding of the nature, causes and implications of social phenomena. Background assumptions, on the other hand, are "unpostulated" and "unlabelled" interpretations of the essence of social reality. Gouldner explains:

> Background assumptions are embedded in a theory's postulation. Operating within and alongside of them, they are, as it were, "silent partners" in the theoretical enterprise. Background assumptions provide some of the bases of choice and the invisible cement for linking together postulations. From beginning to end, they influence a theory's formulation and the researchers to which it leads (Gouldner, 1970, p. 29).

The IDRC's search for research impact has taken place within the theoretical framework established by the postulated assumptions expressed in official documents such as the Program and Policy reviews, the "Proposal for the Design of an Experimental Program on Representative Institutions, Participatory Processes and Public Policy" (IDRC, 1986), and the official documents of the "Impact Assessment of IDRC Public Goods and Policy Projects" (IDRC 1997a and IDRC 1997b). These "postulated assumptions" clearly recognize the complexity of research and the multiple factors that condition and determine the potential impact of research results. One of the official documents of the "Impact Assessment of IDRC Public Goods and Policy Projects," for example, recognizes that

> the search for research impact is problematic in several ways. The nature of research itself makes impact uncertain. No matter how focused on concrete problems, how applied, or how participatory, its role is to investigate, analyze, test and describe, not to implement change....While research can create the awareness, understanding and sense of "critical doubt" which lead to changes in practice, it does not actually make them. (IDRC, 1987a, p. 2).

Nevertheless, the IDRC's attempts to find ways of enhancing the possibilities for research results to "`make a difference' to an individual, group or policy system" (IDRC, 1997b, p.4), has also been guided by "background assumptions" about the nature of social science research. These "background assumptions" are "unpostulated" and "unlabelled," but they are traceable and ultimately recognizable.

In the rationale of both the Participation and Public Policy Program and the "Impact Assessment of IDRC Public Goods and Policy Projects," one finds the tendency for the Centre to define "research impact" in terms of the practical utility of research results. "Impact" according to the IDRC, "is what happens when

someone engages with or is influenced by an outcome or result of research" (IDRC, 1997a, p. 5). "Project impacts", from this perspective, "are the ways in which the project `makes a difference' to an individual, group or policy system" (IDRC, 1997b, p. 4). The emphasis, however, is not on any type of "research influence." *The emphasis is on visible influences, quantifiable and measurable influences that can be used to demonstrate the practical utility of social science research.* This emphasis has become an integral part of the IDRC's criteria for project identification and project approval. Impatience with theoretical and abstract research characterizes the IDRC's approach to social science research.[3]

Two sets of unpostulated assumptions about the IDRC's role in the promotion of research -- political assumptions and intellectual assumptions -- may be responsible for the IDRC's tendency to correlate research impact with the practical utility of research results. At the political level, the IDRC has been, over the last years, obliged to provide concrete evidence of the value of its role as a research funding agency. At the intellectual level, the IDRC has traditionally operated within the boundaries of a predominantly positivist and instrumental tradition. Discussing this tradition is important to understanding the intellectual framework within which the IDRC's search for research impact takes place. The discussion is also important to develop awareness of the existence of gaps that

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[3]Most researchers in Latin America with whom I have had an opportunity to discuss the IDRC's approach to social science research over the last fifteen years would agree with this statement. As a program officer responsible for the organization of the PPP Program, I was able to observe the IDRC's emphasis on practical, useful, and applicable social science research.

separate the research traditions of North and South America.[4]

Influenced by the experience of natural science, the positivist paradigm in social science assumes the existence of an objective reality that operates outside and independently of the researcher. From this perspective, the role of social science research is simply to produce objective knowledge of reality in order to manipulate it. Knowledge, according to this perspective, can and should be separated from the researcher's personal values. Research impact from a positivist perspective can be assessed in terms of a) the capacity for research results to explain reality as it is; and, b) in terms of its capacity to change this reality within the framework of what is possible at a given point in time.

Pragmatism is the philosophical perspective that has informed the development of the positivist orientation in social science research in North America throughout this century. Pragmatism devalued historical as well as theoretical and philosophical analysis. As a philosophical movement, pragmatism advocated the notion that "the test and justification of ideas lies in their contributory function of shaping future experiences" (Thayer, 1970, p. 22). From this perspective, pragmatism "does not insist upon antecedent phenomena but upon consequent phenomena; not upon the precedents but upon the possibilities of action" (Coser, 1971, p.14). Dwight Waldo explains:

> Since the truth of an idea is determined by (or is) what it does, it is in some sense an instrument. Impatience with the "abstract" or "theoretical", and use of such terms as scientific, experience, empirical, practicability, experiment --these characterize the

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[4]For a review of the North American tradition see Martindale, 1960 and Diggins, 1994. For a review of the Latin American experience see Bethell 1996.

pragmatic temper (Waldo, 1955, p. 17).

The influence of the positivistic tradition upon the IDRC's conceptualization of research impact is illustrated in the tendency for the IDRC to define research impact in terms of the "utilization" of research results, as well as in the tendency for the Centre to assume that good research is that which generates "practical results." This view also assumes that good and useful research depends on the capacity for researchers to identify appropriate objectives, utilize adequate methodologies and devise proper ways of disseminating research results. In other words, the assumption is that the practical utility and usefulness of research is a technical problem that demands technical solutions. This view does not take into consideration the reality of *power* and *values* and the way in which these factors condition and determine the practical utility of research results in the field of social sciences. In other words, it does not take into consideration the special relation that exists between *power, values and social science research*, especially, *public policy oriented research*.

Therefore, the specificity of social science research in general, and of public policy oriented research in particular needs to be established as part of the IDRC's exploration of the nature of research impact. This is especially true in view of the tendency that exists to assess the role and contributions of the social sciences from the perspective of the natural sciences.

To grasp the nature of social science research, and more specifically of policy oriented research, it is useful to review the basic assumptions and arguments of the "interpretive" approach to social sciences. The interpretive approach should be seen as an alternative approach to the instrumental and positivist approach that has dominated the IDRC's quest for impact over the years.

The interpretive approach argues that the positivist position in regard to the nature of social reality and of the role of social science research is mistaken and misleading. There is no such a thing as an objective social reality that is independent from the researcher and his/her values. Therefore, the positivist attempt to apprehend reality as an independent entity is futile.

According to the interpretive approach, the purpose of social science research and theory is "to make social reality explicit" (Taylor, 1983a, p.11). However, this approach points out, by making social reality explicit, social science research and theory has the capacity to shape the very reality that it tries to explain. Social reality from this perspective does not exist outside knowledge and outside the mind of researchers. Social reality is socially constructed through the very interpretations of reality that social science generates and reproduces. Social theory and social science research results, therefore, are "constitutive of social reality" (Taylor, 1983a, p. 16).

Social science theory and research provide "the constitutive understanding necessary for continuing, reformed or purified practice" (Taylor, 1983a, p. 16). Therefore, mental experience is not independent from social reality. Different perceptions of life, different definitions of what is right or wrong, legitimate or illegitimate, can create different understandings of the nature of social institutions and power structures. In turn, these understandings shape social practice and, through it, the very institutions and power structures that they try to elucidate (Taylor, 1983a). Thus the role of social science and social science research is not only to explain social reality but also to "define the understandings that underpin different forms of social practice..." (Taylor, 1983a, p. 20). By making explicit

the meaning of social action, social theory becomes an active participant in the making of the very history it tries to explain. Social science researchers, from this perspective, "are in the business of proposing and fashioning ways of looking at, thinking, and talking about, -- and hence contributing to the construction and deconstruction of social objects" (Gouldner, 1973, p.105). From this perspective, good social science research is that which is capable of elucidating social reality for the purpose of facilitating social practice. Charles Taylor explains:

> If theory is about practice...then what makes a theory right is that it brings the practice out in the clear. And what this leads to is that the practice can be more effective in a certain way. Not just in any way, but in the way practices can be when we overcome to some degree the muddle, confusion, and cross-purposes which affect them as long as they are ill-understood. To have a good theory in this domain is to understand better what we are doing; and this means that our action can be somewhat freer of the stumbling, self-defeating character which previously afflicted it; our action becomes less haphazard and contradictory, less prone to produce what we did not what at all" (Taylor, 1983b, p. 78).

The double function of social science knowledge as *explanation* of social reality and as a *social influence* with the capacity to change the very reality that it is trying to explain allows us to distinguish between at least two different operational standards that can be used to assess the value and significance of social science research: *theoretical relevancy* and *practical utility*.

By *theoretical relevancy* we mean the capacity for social science research to articulate historically authentic, and scientifically valid and legitimate explanations and interpretations of social phenomena. By *practical utility*, we mean the capacity for social science research to shape the way in which society functions. Impact, in the IDRC, is predominantly assessed in terms of *practical utility*.

However, any attempt to understand and assess the value and implications of social science research requires an analytical differentiation between *theoretical relevancy* and *practical utility*. From this perspective, the value and significance of social science research and theory can be measured in terms of its theoretical relevancy (capacity to make social reality explicit) as well as in terms of its direct effects on the reality that it is trying to explain (for example, capacity to reorient processes of public policy making and implementation).

The relationship between *theoretical relevancy* and *practical utility* is a very complex one. This is to say, the *practical utility* of research is not necessarily correlated with its *theoretical relevancy*. Theoretically relevant research can have negligible effects on social reality while research of relatively low theoretical relevancy can be instrumental in the design and formulation of public policies and programs.[5]

The reasons for this are relatively simple to explain: social practice and social science research take place within structures of social relationships. These structures are power structures; that is, they are organized around dominant social interests. To change the organization of social reality is to change the power structures through which society is organized.

From this perspective, the capacity for social science research to influence the functioning of society depends on its power to change existing social relations against the interests

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[5]Illustrations of defective theoretical knowledge that have achieved high levels of practical utility abound. In the field of Public Administration, for example, it is widely accepted today that the programs of administrative technical assistance to the Third World organized by American foundations with the support of American universities in the 1950's and 1960's were based on a superficial understanding of the nature of power and the state in the Third World, as well as on a defective interpretation of the phenomenon of bureaucracy (see Rondinelli, 1987; Pérez, 1991)

of those who dominate these social relations; or, on its capacity to produce results that are compatible with existing social power arrangements.

What happens when researchers' values prevent them from manipulating their research objectives and methodologies to comply with the requirements of existing power structures and dominant social values? What happens when there is no congruency between research results and recommendations and the interests that shape existing power structures? What happens when research projects produce theoretically relevant and authentic social science knowledge that is not compatible with the interests and priorities defended by the state and dominant social institutions? What happens when the theoretical relevancy of research conflicts with its capacity to be useful and practical? These questions will be explored in the review of the three projects selected for this study.

II. The Projects

This section contains a brief description of the central objectives, arguments and conclusions of the three projects under consideration. Understanding the nature of these projects is essential to understanding their impact on social reality.

The three projects under consideration are policy oriented studies. More specifically, they explored the political dimension of public policy making and implementation, and were designed *to analyze and influence* power relations.

The results of the three projects reviewed in this report did not manage to visibly affect the policy and decision making processes that they studied. The lack of practical utility in these three cases was not the result of improper or inadequate research designs, project implementation problems or any other technical difficulty. The lack of practical utility in the cases

under consideration can only be explained by understanding the critical nature of the research results generated by this project, and the incongruent relationship between existing power structures and the arguments and conclusions presented by the researchers. The three projects under consideration also show how the personal values of researchers condition the possibilities for research results to achieve practical utility.

Representative Institutions and Public Policy in Argentina

The Argentinean project analyzed the phenomenon of participation and public policy at the national level. Its main objective was to understand the role of economic corporations in the formulation and implementation of public policy in Argentina during the government of Raúl Alfonsín between 1983 and 1989. At a theoretical level, the project explored the relationship between the *Régimen Social de Acumulación*, or Social Regime of Accumulation (SRA), and the *Régimen Político de Gobierno* or Political Regime of Government (PRG). The Social Regime of Accumulation was defined as "a construction that refers to the complex and changing structure of institutions and practices that have a direct effect on the process of capital accumulation" (Nun, 1990, p. 6). The Political Regime of Government refers to "the institutions, processes, and practices that are conventionally called `political' such as public administration, parties, elections, etc...." (Nun, 1990, p. 8).

The study of the relationship between the Social Regime of Accumulation and the Political Regime of Government was focused on the examination of the relationship between economic corporations and the state in the period 1983-89. This relationship is seen by the researchers as "one of the central forms of articulations between the PRG and the SRA" (Nun, 1990,

p. 2). The researchers' central argument was that the democratization of Argentina requires the transformation of both the Political Regime of Government that was inherited by the elected government of Raúl Alfonsín in 1983, and the Social Regime of Accumulation that has operated in the country since its emergence in the 1930s. Furthermore, it requires the democratic articulation between the two.

Prior to 1983, Argentina had developed a Political Regime of Government that left little room for mechanisms of political participation and political representation to develop and function, and allowed corporations to negotiate directly with the government to define the public policy agenda. The process of transition to democracy that was formally inaugurated in 1983 had the capacity to open a range of possibilities for the democratic re-articulation of the relationship between the PRG and the SRA. However, Alfonsín's attempt to democratize this relationship was hampered by both the weakness of the Argentinean state and the fragmented nature of the corporatist structure of representation in the country. Although the Argentinean state permeates the entire social structure of the country, it is unable to formulate and implement policies in a relatively independent manner. It is "central" to the life of the Argentinean society, but not "strong" because it is "colonized" by corporations (Nun, 1990, pp. 11-12). This condition fragments the state's actions and limits its capacity to formulate and implement public policies in response to social demands formulated outside the corporatist structure of representation. Those policies dealing with fundamental issues such as land tenure, resource allocation, and income and surplus distribution were systematically blocked by the corporations and could not be implemented by the Alfonsín government. Only those policies what were considered neutral and did not significantly affect the power structure of the country

were implemented. An example of a neutral policy is the one formulated by the Alfonsín government to restructure the Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria (Lattuada, 1991, p.168).

Thus the "colonization" of the state by corporations, and the consequent fragmentation of its power, rendered the Alfonsín government unable to redefine and democratize the relationship between the Political Regime of Government and the Social Regime of Accumulation. The weakness of the Argentinean state was further accentuated by the crisis in the public finances of the country and expressed in its low administrative capacity.

The fragmentation of the structure of representation of corporate interests was another impediment for the democratic re-synchronization of the relationship between the Social Regime of Accumulation and the Political Regime of Government. The researchers highlight this fragmentation in their study of the corporatist structure of representation in the Argentinean economy's agricultural and industrial sectors.

The structure of representation of corporate interests in the agricultural sector of Argentina is divided into four main entities: the Sociedad Rural Argentina or Argentinean Rural Society (SRA), the Federación Agraria Argentina or Argentinean Agrarian Federation (FAA), the Confederaciones Rurales Argentinas or Argentinean Rural Confederations (CRA), and the Confederación Intercorporativa Agropecuaria or Intercooperative Farming Confederation (CONINAGRO) (Lattuada, 1990, p. 17). These organizations differ among themselves in terms of their constituencies, levels of organization and ideological orientation (Nun, 1990, p. 17).

The corporatist structure of representation includes national organizations such as the Unión Industrial Argentina or Argentinean Industrial Union (UIA), the Consejo Argentino de la

Industria or Argentinean Council of Industry (CAI), and the Confederación General de la Industria or General Confederation of Industry (CGI); chambers and associations organized by product, industrial branch and region; associations of big enterprises; and multi sectorial fronts (Lattuada, 1990, pp. 3-13).

The weakness of the Argentinean state, combined with the fragmentation of the structure of representation of corporate interests in the private sector, renders difficult the formulation of either "meso-corporatist" or "macro-corporatist" pacts that can open the door for the democratic re-synchronization of the relationship between the Social Regime of Accumulation and the Political Regime of Government (Nun, p. 1990, 21). This is illustrated by four case studies of government attempts to achieve corporatist pacts. These include: the Programa Nacional Agropecuario or National Farmer Program (PRONAGRO), the Comisión de Concertación Política Lechera or Milk Policy Negotiation Commission (COCOPOLE), the Fondo de Promoción de la Actividad Lechera or Fund for Promotion of Milk Activity (FOPAL), the pharmaceutical industry, and the micro-electronics industry.

The project also studied the possibility of building corporatist pacts at the regional level in the study of *concertación social* (social negotiation or coordination) in the provinces of Córdoba and Rio Negro. The problem of the fragmentation of the state and of the corporatist structure of representation identified by the researchers at the national level reemerged in these regional studies. However, the researchers argue that the formulation of meso-corporatist pacts is an avenue that requires more exploration.

The conclusions of the study are not very optimistic: the Alfonsín government's failure to democratize relations between the Social Regime of Accumulation and the Political Regime of

Government in Argentina "confirmed the existence of corporatist citadels that are immune to the vote of the popular majority (Nun, 1990, p. 16). The project offered important policy guidelines and recommendations. In general terms, the researchers argue that the Alfonsín government should have strengthened the capacity of those state agencies central to the process of *concertación social* to penetrate these citadels and to democratize the relationship between the PRG and the SRA. The state should also have mobilized political support from inside and outside the corporations to support government initiatives (Nun, 1991, p. 16). José Nun explains:

> The point was to define the game and to initiate it while reserving the right to admit into the game only those participants who were willing to obey the rules. Rather than doing this, the government opened a discussion about the game itself...(Nun, 1991, p. 10).

These general conclusions and recommendations are broken down into more specific political and policy suggestions in the different studies produced by this project. A summary of them is offered by José Nun in the report that he prepared during this consultancy (see Nun, 1997).[6]

Lessons from the Argentinean Case

The Argentinean project was able to make explicit what is considered the main structural obstacle faced by the process of transition to democracy in Argentina: the presence of corporatist structures of political representation that are relatively immune

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[6]An example of the types of specific contributions generated by this project is the recommendation of the researchers to create regional consensuses about the relationship between the state, the economy and social forces in Córdoba and Rio Negro. Other specific contributions and recommendations are the ones offered in regard to the failure of PRONAGRO (see Nun and Lattuada, 1991, pp. 45-62).

to popular electoral results and pressures. This was no insignificant achievement in a moment when political euphoria had marked social science analysis with a sense of triumphalism and excessive optimism in regard to the possibilities for the consolidation of democracy in Argentina. José Nun explains: "As far as I know, we were the first to argue that it was necessary to study the Argentinean transition from a double perspective: as a process of political change affecting the Régimen Político de Gobierno; and as a process of economic change affecting the Régimen Social de Acumulación. In other words, we argue that the Argentinean transition was in fact two transitions with two different rhythms and logic" (Nun, 1997).

According to the researchers involved in this project, the consolidation of democracy required fundamental changes in the nature of the relationship between the political and the economic structures of Argentinean society. The conceptual and analytical contribution of this project was very important at a time when democracy and democratization were perceived as a simple transformation of the political structures and processes whereby society elects governments and political representatives. The project, however, did not stop at identifying the contradictory relationship between the corporate nature of state-society relations and democratic electoral politics and processes in Argentina. It also offered specific recommendations in terms of what to do to break the control that corporatist interests have maintained within the Argentinean state since the 1930s. It proposed a specific form of political behavior for governments interested in promoting and consolidating democracy (see Nun, 1997; Nun and Lattuada, 1991).

The theoretical relevancy of the social knowledge generated by this project is beyond doubt. The reports produced by the project have been positively received in intellectual circles,

not only in Argentina, but throughout Latin America. However, the impact achieved by this research project can only be established by taking into consideration the relationship between knowledge, politics and power that was discussed in the general review of the relationship between theoretical relevancy and the practical utility of research results.

The Argentinean project introduced a fundamental new dimension to the way in which democracy and democratic transitions were discussed in Argentinean society in the mid 1980s. José Nun explains:

> The main impact of this project...was to reorganize the conceptual and analytical points of reference that were being used in Argentina and other Latin American countries to discuss democratic transitions (Nun, 1997).

The impact of the Argentinean project as a contribution to more effective social and political practice can be established by the level of attention that the results of this project received in academic, political and media circles. The work of Hector Maceira and Oscar Grillo (La Concertación Social en las Provincias de Córdoba y de Río Negro, Buenos Aires: CLADE, 1989) generated heated discussions in the provinces of Córdoba and Rio Negro. This work proposed the creation of regional consensuses as a way of breaking the impasse that resulted from the inability of the Argentinean government to articulate a national consensus around the relationship between the state, the economy and society. The impact was more significant in the province of Rio Negro where the government of the province organized a series of workshops to analyze the conclusions and recommendations of this work as well as its provincial and regional implications.

The academic importance of this project's analysis is seen in its dissemination and distribution not only in Argentina but also throughout the Latin American region (see Cotler, 1993). The

works of Mario Lattuada, Hector Maceira, Oscar Grillo and Jose Nun, became text books and works of reference in several university courses. The analysis presented by Nun and Lattuada (1991) regarding the failure of PRONAGRO generated an important debate in which researchers and policy makers involved in this case had an opportunity to argue and discuss general and specific dimensions of the policy making process within the Argentinean government. Moreover, the different chapters of this book are currently used as "case studies" in different courses, seminars and graduate public policy programs conducted in Argentina by people like Oscar Ozslak, Jorge Schvarzer and Carlos Acuna. Moreover, the article by Mario Lattuada (Nun and Lattuada, 1991) has become an obligatory point of reference in the study of the process of economic policy making during the Alfonsín government.[7]

Did the knowledge produced by this research project influence the way in which policies are formulated and implemented in Argentina? The short answer to this question is no. Social knowledge is only one among many variables that explain the behaviour of governments and social institutions. Interest and power - and this was the very lesson at the foundation of the PPP Program - shape the priorities and functions of the state, governments and political institutions. The research results produced by the Argentinean team became, as soon as they were released, part of the arsenal of ideas and arguments that have shaped the recent political evolution of Argentina. They have been widely used to identify obstacles on

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[7]In a recent meeting in Central America with researchers at the Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales (CRIES), I found that the basic conceptual approach articulated by Nun (Nun and Lattuada, 1991) is being used (with necessary variations) to study the obstacles to democratic consolidation in Central America (see Saldomando, 1998).

the way to democratic consolidation; they form part of the electoral platforms of political parties, and certainly they form part of the intellectual capital of Argentinean society. However, public policies are expressions and manifestations of the balance of political power at a particular point in time.

The arrival of Carlos Menen in 1989 to the presidency of Argentina represented a radical shift in the direction of the democratic transition of this country. The actual and potential policy recommendations generated by the project were incompatible with the neo-liberal ideology of the Menen government. However, while the potential *policy utility* of this project was significantly reduced by the political transformation of Argentina after the government of Raúl Alfonsín, the *theoretical relevancy* of its research results continue to be significant as demonstrated by the ongoing use of the analytical structure and conceptual framework produced by this initiative.

Participation and Local Governments in Cuba

The Cuban project offered a unique opportunity to study the phenomenon of participation within the context of a socialist regime. The project was designed to evaluate local governments both as mechanisms of popular participation and as structures of government (Dilla and González, 1991, p. 7). The evaluation was based on a detailed study of the organization and functioning of local governments in four municipalities: Bayamo, Centro Habana, Santa Cruz del Norte and Chambas.

The study of participation in Cuba requires an understanding of the historical context of the Cuban political system since the revolution in 1959. This historical context can be divided into two periods: The period of charismatic authority covering the 1960s and early 1970s and the period of revolutionary legal-formal authority from the mid-1970s to the present.

The first period was characterized by high levels of centralization of power in the Communist Party and, more specifically, in its leader, Fidel Castro. During this period, "the essence of the political system was the direct relationship of Castro with the people" (Ritter, 1980, p. 33). According to A.R.M. Ritter,

> The political system throughout the 1960s, and especially in the latter half of that decade, can be considered to be "democratically representative" neither in the sense that mechanisms were used or even existed for the popular selection of the leadership, nor in the sense that people were able to influence policy making through formal mechanisms. It is very important to emphasize, however, that despite this, policies were formulated which where highly beneficial to the large majority of the population. With surprising success, these policies redistributed income, reduced urban-rural disparities, virtually eliminated "open" unemployment and achieved universal access to education and public health as well as sports (Ritter, 1980, p. 35).

This situation changed dramatically during the 1970s after the leadership of the revolution announced the beginning of a process of institutionalization of the political regime (Dilla and González, 1991, p. 4).

From the researchers' perspective, the process of institutionalization of the 1970s represented a significant step toward the consolidation of participatory democracy in Cuba. This position was corroborated by Ritter in 1980 when he wrote that:

> despite the position of the Party, I conclude tentatively that at the local level, where citizens select candidates and directly elect their representatives, "democracy" defined in terms of control over leadership selection exists to some degree (Ritter, 1980, p. 64).

Through interviews, direct observation, and the study of documents, the project concluded that the election of municipal authorities takes place "in a climate of liberty" (Dilla and González, 1991, p.35). The accountability of municipal government authorities is facilitated by *Reuniones de Rendición de Cuenta*

(RRC), which also function as mechanisms of aggregation and transmission of popular demands. However, problems such as excessive formalism, individualism, and bureaucratization seriously limit the capacity of the RRCs to function as effective mechanisms of popular control on local governments. The Municipal Assemblies that function as the expression of state power at the municipal level are viewed by the researchers as important mechanisms for participation in the municipal decision making process. However, they cannot be characterized as the centre of state power at the local level. Lack of administrative capacity and inexperience are some of the factors that limit the role and potential development of the Municipal Assemblies.

The capacity of the municipal governments to govern is also limited by the centralist tendencies of the national and provincial governments within which municipal authorities operate (Dilla and González, 1991, p. 54). The enhancement of this capacity would require a redefinition of the state-society relations that were established by the revolution in 1959. In this relation, civil society is seen as a monolithic body functioning in a harmonious relationship with the state.

> Even considering its undoubted achievements, Cuba's municipal participation system has been hampered by excessive formality and bureaucracy, so that the final result falls short of what was wanted and planned in the original design. The system has consequently produced an unwanted result in encouraging a rather paternalistic, top-down relationship between local government and the community, all in a fundamentally parochial surrounding. Sustained community self-government experiences are few, while the differential appeals of participation remain stark. The meagre performance of representative institutions vis-à-vis their prerogatives as top state authorities in their respective territories is also a negative factor (Dilla and González, 1996, p. 77-78).

The researchers argue in favour of a reconceptualization of the traditional relationship between the central state and local

governments in order to come to terms with the issue of diversity within civil society:

> A substantial primary principle is the need to advance more pluralistic political styles, which will eventually encourage greater vigour and autonomy on the part of civil society. From a logical point of view, the issue seems simple enough: every society is diverse -class, gender, and generational differences exist, and so democratic public activity can be expressed only through pluralism. Politically, the issue is much more complex because, among other reasons, of the rejection professed by most Marxists for the very concept of pluralism, and also because of the limited use made of it by the liberal academy, which tends to limit the concept of democracy to institutional arrangements (Dilla, González, 1996, p 78).

Their recommendation is not to adopt the liberal conception of pluralism, but to adopt a socialist interpretation of the concept. This involves the need to provide "more autonomy to the political associations that operate within civil society and a redefinition of their obsolete role as `transmission belts' from the people to the state" (Dilla and González, 1991, p. 59).

Lessons from the Cuban Case

The Cuban case offers important lessons about the relationship between theoretical relevancy and the practical utility of research results within the context of a revolutionary regime in crisis. Once again, this research project was conducted according to rigorous research and intellectual standards. The project managed to identify several crucial tensions and contradictions between the objective of participation, as stated in the formal objectives of the Cuban government, and the centralized, vertical and paternalistic structures of political participation that takes place at the level of municipal government in Cuba. From the identification of these contradictions, the researchers were able to propose specific

measures oriented toward the closing of the gap between the official democratic objectives of the revolution and the actual decision making process at the local level.

It is important to understand the national context within which this project was designed and organized. Haroldo Dilla explains how between 1986 and 1989, Cuba lived a period of relative political tolerance and flexibility. This period culminated with the IV Congress of the Partido Comunista Cubano and the Constitutional reform of 1992. During this period, academics and intellectuals were able to participate and influence the discussion about the nature of the Cuban revolutionary process and its future. The Centro de Estudios sobre América(CEA) emerged during this period as Cuba's most important and most independent research centre. The intellectual calibre of its members and the international linkages developed by CEA provided the organization with an important level of academic freedom and legitimacy.[8] In these conditions, the researchers in charge of the Cuban project tried to achieve both theoretical relevancy and practical utility. That is, they tried to articulate adequate explanations of the nature of local governments in Cuba and the same time they tried to influence the very structure and functioning of local state structures.

The outputs of this project are impressive:

> Haroldo Dilla and Gerardo González, Participación Popular y Desarrollo en los Municipios Cubanos. La Habana: Centro de Estudios sobre América y Editora Política, 1993. Three thousand copies of this book were sold. A second edition of this book was published in Caracas, Venezuela, by Editorial Tropykos.

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[8]Haroldo Dilla points out in his report that the contact with IDRC was the one that opened for CEA the door of international research assistance (Dilla, 1997).

Articles by Haroldo Dilla and Gerardo González appeared in Haroldo Dilla, ed., La Democracia en Cuba y el Diferendo con Estados Unidos. La Habana: Centro de Estudios sobre America, 1995 and 1996; Haroldo Dilla, ed., La Participación Popular en Cuba y los Retos del Futuro. La Habana: Centro de Estudios sobre America, 1996; Michael Kaufman and Haroldo Dilla, Communitary Development and Grassroots Participation: London and Ottawa: Zed Books and the International Development Research Centre, 1997.

Eight articles in academic journals.

One national workshop and six local workshops to discuss the project's result with a total participation of 228 people.

19 presentations made by the project's researchers in national events.

Presentations in several Canadian, American, Latin American and European universities including York University, Harvard University, Stanford, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México y Complutense de Madrid.

In the political and policy arena: Four reports presented to the National Parliament, a report to a special commission in charge of formulating a new electoral law, and reports to a special commission in charge of reorganizing the municipal government system of Cuba. In this case, the CEA research team directed a group of advisors to collaborate with the National Parliament.

The political context of Cuba began to change by 1993. Innumerable tensions and contradictions generated by the economic crisis of Cuba after the collapse of the Soviet Union manifested themselves in the organization of different groups with different positions about the future of the Revolution. CEA sided with the most politically flexible and pragmatic groups. In the end, this position became vulnerable to the pressures of the most conservative sectors of the Cuban political and bureaucratic elite. CEA was politically intervened and closed in March of 1996, only months after the researchers in charge of this project had received an invitation to form part of a national commission

to elaborate a new Municipal Law.[9]

In his answer to the questionnaire that was used in this activity, Haroldo Dilla vividly explains the tensions involved in the definition of the project objectives and in the articulation and presentation of its results. It shows the pressures suffered by the researchers and the entire institution of CEA to modify the research project in order for its objectives and results to accommodate the political needs of the most conservative sectors of the Cuban political elite. It is in this conjuncture described by Dilla that a researcher or a research institution can choose between maintaining the theoretical relevancy of a research project or achieving practical utility. If the researchers at CEA had chosen to privilege practical utility over theoretical relevancy, they could have accommodated the research project, its methodology, objectives and results to fit the needs and desires of the dominant forces within the system. Indeed, they may well have seen their analysis reflected in government resolutions, policy normative frameworks, legislation and other concrete measures of practical utility. Instead, they decided to press for theoretical relevancy without abandoning the hope for practical utility. Unfortunately, political conditions in Cuba turned against them, and as a result, the potential practical utility of the project was lost. Does this mean that the project had no impact whatsoever?

According to Haroldo Dilla, the impact of this project must be assessed within a context wider than the one that prevails in Cuba today. In other words, the impact of this project must be

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[9]CEA had been under attack by the orthodox elements of the Cuban Communist Party and the state bureucracy since 1995. CEA's independent and critical views of the Cuban political system were considered dangerous by these elements. The Centre has now been reopened and functions under the control of the hardliners of the Communist Party.

established in terms of a) its contribution to the historical record of a social experience that was examined and studied in a rigorous way; and b) its contribution to the intense debate that is taking place in Cuba today and that is oriented towards the definition of a basic social consensus about the future of the Revolution.

Participation and Public Policy in Costa Rica

The Costa Rican project explored the limitations of, and possibilities for participation and popular democracy in Costa Rica. Specifically, it analyzed the emergence and evolution of the housing committees, and their impact on the struggle for housing in the communities of Guarari, Carmen Lyra, Oscar Felipe and El Nazareno.

The housing committees emerged in Costa Rica in the late 1970s as popular political responses to the shortage of affordable housing for low-income families (Lara and Molina, 1991, p. 4). During the early 1980s they developed into effective pressure groups operating in association with traditional political parties under the name of "fronts for housing." The project analyzes the impact and evolution of the following four housing fronts: the Coordinadora Patriótica Nacional or National Patriotic Coordinator (COPAN), the Frente Democrático de la Vivienda or Democratic Housing Front (FDV), the Frente Costarricense de la Vivienda or Costa Rican Housing Front (FCV) and the Asociación Nacional para la Vivienda or National Association for Housing (ANAVI). According to the researchers, these housing fronts were successful in pressuring the states to respond to popular demands for housing. However, by the late 1980s the role and orientation of the housing committees and the housing fronts had been depoliticized. They had been transformed

from "pressure groups and sources of conflict into organizations constructing houses in close collaboration with the government" (Lara and Molina, 1991, p. 7).

To understand the phenomenon of participation in Costa Rica, it is necessary to understand the evolution of the pattern of state-society relations that emerged in this country after the civil war of 1948. The winning political force in this conflict had as one of its central objectives the diversification of the productive base of the country to avoid dependency on coffee and to allow new social groups to participate in the economic and political life of Costa Rican society. As Rovira explains:

> The power structure [of Costa Rica] was altered after the civil war of 1948. From that moment the middle bourgeoisie, in close alliance with the urban bourgeoisie, began to occupy a better position in the national power structure. The old fractions of the ruling class -- composed of the agro-exporting elements of society that emerged in the 19th century were then forced to make concessions to other social groups during the second half of the present century (Rovira, 1982, p. 177).

The organization of the new social relations emerging from the war of 1948 required a strong state with the capacity to "manage the regime" and respond to contradictory social demands (Rovira, 1982, p. 43). To achieve these objectives, the government introduced three fundamental changes in the organization and functioning of Costa Rican society: the elimination of the army, the nationalization of the banking system, and expansion of the scope of the state. These changes gave the Costa Rican state the capacity to define the rules of economic competition and to manage political conflict within the boundaries of the established regime (see Lara and Molina, 1991, pp. 27-31).

The pattern of state-society relations that Costa Rica developed after 1948 has been significantly reshaped since the early 1980s when the government began to promote the

internationalization of the national economy beyond the traditional scope of the Central American region. This decision was to a considerable extent the result of pressures and recommendations of international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to reduce the scope of the state and to strengthen the capacity of the market to lead the national economy (see Lara and Molina, 1991, pp. 32-34).

The redefinition of the role of the Costa Rican state was reflected in the creation of the Sistema Financiero Nacional para la Vivienda (National Financial System for Housing) in 1986. The new organization was created in response to the challenge posed to the government by the housing committees and the housing fronts. It established that the state would only be responsible for the financing of housing facilities for needy families. The beneficiaries of state financial assistance would absorb the cost of design, planning, and building of the houses (Lara and Molina, 1991, 34-37).

The same year, the newly elected government of Oscar Arias signed a pact with COPAN, FDV, and FCV -- three of the most important housing fronts. According to this pact, the government would begin massive construction of housing for those represented by the fronts. In return, the fronts would depoliticize their activities. Popular participation in the implementation of the housing programs would be oriented toward practical purposes rather than political ones.

In this context, the housing committees and the housing fronts were transformed into instruments of government policy. COPAN, for example, began to operate as a "private construction enterprise working directly with the government to develop state housing policies" (Lara and Molina, p. 7). In other words,

> not only was the system capable of confronting the crisis and containing the conflict, but, without much

> resistance, it converted the crisis into the process of neo-liberal change and structural adjustment policies that had such terrible consequences for the living conditions of the popular sectors. As of 1986, the belligerence of the housing committees was turned into support for and co-ordination with state actions. (Lara and Molina, 1997, p. 51).

Participation, then, was transformed into what Denis Goulet has called a "form of do it yourself problem solving in small-scale operations" (Goulet, 1989, p. 176). This type of participation is not designed to question or challenge the rules of the game, but simply to survive within those rules. In the final analysis, the housing committees became, according to the researchers, "a strategy for survival" (Lara and Molina, 1991, p. 19).

The redefinition of state's role that took place during the 1980s represented a fundamental change in the organization of social and political life in Costa Rica, and more specifically, in the nature of state-society relations that developed in this country after 1948. The main function of the Costa Rican state is no longer to "manage the regime" but to support the development of a market oriented economy (see COREC, 1990, pp. 29-31). Participation in this context is increasingly viewed as the mobilization of people's energy to support the state, and through it, the development of a transnationalized market-regulated economy.

Lessons from the Costa Rican Case

The central objective of this project was the development of social strategies within which the housing fronts of Costa Rica could successfully confront and hopefully defeat the neo-liberal agenda of the Costa Rican governments in the late 1980s. To achieve this purpose, the researchers combined theoretical analysis with practical forms of political intervention. The theoretical dimension of this project is reflected in the attempt

by the researchers to make explicit the nature of state policy objectives and the contradictions between these policies and the interest of the popular sectors of Costa Rican society. At the practical and political level, researchers attempted to induce social movements to resolve these contradictions by politically confronting, and hopefully defeating the neo-liberal agenda of the government. This was done "through informal and close relations between researchers and the leaders of these committees" (Lara, 1997). The activism of the Centro de Estudios para la Acción Social (CEPAS), the organization responsible for this project, has to be understood within the political context of Central America in the 1980s. Silvia Lara explains:

> Until 1987/1988 we believed that popular organizations would end up producing a strong political crisis in response to the process of structural adjustments implemented by the Costa Rican government. This crisis would have been congruent with the revolutionary conditions of Central America during the 1980s (Lara, 1997).

In these circumstances, the work of CEPAS was oriented towards the generation of practical knowledge that community organizations could use in their political efforts. This emphasis on the practical dimension of social science research explains the limited efforts to publish, diffuse and discuss the explanations of social reality generated by the project.

There can be no doubt that the theoretical dimension of this project is relevant in terms of its conceptualization of the nature of the government agenda, the nature of the popular sectors of Costa Rica and the contradictions between the two. There is very little doubt, either, that the active participation of researchers in the political process at the community level in the barrios where the research project took place had a positive effect on the development of the organizational capacity of the housing fronts. Otherwise, their involvement in the political

struggle of the housing committees would not have been tolerated by the members of their leaders or by the members of the community. It is important to mention that the researchers' involvement with the community of El Nazareno went on for two years after the official end of the project (Lara, 1997). Did the theoretical relevancy of the project translate into political capacity to change the policy orientation of the Costa Rican government according to the original objectives of the project? The short answer to this question is no. At least, the intended effects of the researchers never materialized. As the researchers themselves explain:

> It was clear that for these organizations, participation was not conceived as a politically formative or (re)-educational experience. "Raising people's political consciousness" or changing the system was not of interest to them, although it was of interest to the housing fronts who may have worked with them. In fact, our interviews indicated that participants (other than the odd militant in a left-wing party) did not see any correlation between the real problems they faced and the prevailing social order. Rather, poverty was seen as a phenomenon which was as natural as rain or sun -- nothing could be done to change it or avoid it -- and social differences were seen as a product of the natural order of things in dichotomous opposites: good/bad, above/below, poor/rich. Their struggle, therefore, was not against the status quo but rather against exclusion; they demanded to be included in the status quo by pressuring government institutions. Participation, rather than being an objective, was a necessity which became a decisive factor under specific circumstances (Lara and Molina, 1997, p. 41).

Does the Costa Rican experience indicate that action oriented research at the community level is not an appropriate vehicle to induce social change at the policy and state level? Not necessarily. Originally, the objectives of the housing committees were vague and undefined. It was perfectly legitimate for action oriented researchers to assume that it was possible to orient the

struggle of the housing committees toward the radical reformulation of the normative framework within which housing policies were formulated by the Costa Rican government. After all, as Silvia Lara has pointed out, the social and political context of Central America was conducive to radical policy changes.

The political evolution of societies, however, cannot be predicted with certainty. All that action oriented researchers like those involved in the Costa Rican research project can do is to ponder the historical possibilities within which they operate. In this case, history moved in a different direction than that estimated and hoped by researchers.

Does this mean that the result of this project had no impact whatsoever? No. Like in the Argentinean case, the research results and the participatory approach used by researchers contributed to the development of organized social strategies that were relatively successful in terms of their capacity to shape and condition housing policies in Costa Rica. That the results of the researchers' efforts did not match their original intentions does not mean that their effort was irrelevant. Once again, public policies are not determined by good research results. They are the result of political struggle and competition. Moreover, the rationale guided by the social actors that participate in the processes of policy making and implementation are complex. In this case, the ultimate political objectives of the housing fronts changed over the course of several years of struggle. What began as a protest against the status quo became an effort to participate in the status quo. From this perspective, the project achieved an unintended result: the incorporation of the community organizations in the policy making process of government. This result was significantly different from the original motivation of researchers who were

trying to promote a discussion about the nature of the regime itself rather than a discussion within the regime. According to Silvia Lara:

> We propose that the results and impact of this project be established within the framework of complex political processes. Many forces operate within these frameworks. This project was only one of them. There is no doubt that the efforts of the housing committees, NGOs and other organizations involved in the struggle for housing forced the government to redefine its housing policies (Lara, 1997).

There is no doubt that the emergence of neo-liberal economic and social policies that became dominant in Latin America by the end of the 1980s had a direct effect on the possibilities for this project to achieve a more significant impact on the political and policy process that it studied. The institutionalization of neo-liberal thinking and the decline of revolutionary politics throughout Latin America significantly reduced the possibilities for popular organizations to force governments to change the rules that govern the political and policy making processes of Latin American societies.

The written outputs of this project were limited. Silvia Lara identifies the following:

a) Eugenia Molina, Participación y Democracia Popular en los Comités de Lucha por Vivienda en Costa Rica. San José: Centro de Estudios para la Acción Social, 1991.

b) Silvia Lara and Eugenia Molina. "Participation and Development in Cuban Municipalities", in Michael Kaufman and Haroldo Dilla Alfonso, Community Power and Grassroots Democracy. London and Ottawa: Zed Books and IDRC, 1997;

c) Two presentations to participants of the "Summer Institute" organized by the IDRC in San José, in 1992 and 1993.

Silvia Lara attributes this limited output to the institutional culture and objectives of CEPAS (Lara, 1997). As it was indicated

before, this research institution was predominantly concerned with the development of information and analysis that the housing committees could use to enhance their political power. This information and analysis was disseminated in informal ways in meetings and discussions with community leaders. The emphasis of the project was on action rather than on the production of written results. The implementation of the project was designed to gather information and analysis that could be used politically by the housing committees in their everyday struggles. One could say that in this project, the research process was at least as important as the production of conventional research outputs.

Summary

Our analysis of the three selected projects emphasized the contextual political factors that conditioned the capacity for the three projects under consideration to have some impact on social reality. This emphasis has to do with the fundamental nature of PPP projects and their policy orientation. The questionnaires answered by the researchers involved in this activity show how institutions' reactions to their contextual political environment affect the way in which research projects balance the practical utility and the theoretical relevancy of their results.

The Argentinean case -- the more abstract and general of the three projects -- produced reports that were read and discussed by key political and economic actors in Argentina, including President Alfonsín himself. This by itself should be considered a direct and impressive impact. However, in terms of "practical utility" and "practical application" the project, as José Nun indicates in his questionnaire, did not produce visible results.

CLADE is a solid research institution with a critical

theoretical orientation in regard to neo-liberal views of the state and public policy. This orientation shapes the way in which CLADE reacts to its political environment and determines the way in which the institution balances its concern with the practical utility and the theoretical relevancy of its research results.

CLADE's critical views of neo-liberalism made the results of the project "Representative Institutions and Public Policy in Argentina" incompatible with the orientation and objectives of the Menen Government.

In the case of Costa Rica, CEPAS was an organization explicitly dedicated to participatory and action oriented research within a normative and ideological orientation that emphasized the need for more popular forms of democracy in Costa Rica. The nature of CEPAS determined the type of research projects that this institution formulated and implemented, the type of relationships they wanted to establish with popular organizations and the state, and consequently the type of research impact and results that they wanted to achieve.

The action oriented approach used by Costa Rican researchers ensured that the analysis produced by researchers was available to the housing committees of the communities where the project "Participation and Public Policy in Costa Rica" operated. Therefore, there was a direct line of communication between research results and the beneficiaries of the Costa Rican research project. The policy impact of this project, however, was not visible because of the contradictory nature of the relationship between CEPAS' institutional orientation and the nature of public policy making that emerged in Costa Rica in the second half of the 1980's.

The Cuban project was designed to facilitate the establishment of a permanent line of communication between researchers, their analysis, local authorities and local

communities. During the first phase of their project, CEA was successful in maintaining this line of communication and in influencing the decision making process at the level of the local state in the communities under study. When the political conditions of Cuba changed in 1993, CEA decided to maintain its reformist and critical position in regard to the Cuban political system. This decision provoked the closing of the institution in 1996 and eliminated the possibilities for the project "Participation and Local Government in Cuba" to condition the policy making process of the government.

The three projects under consideration show how institutions' reactions to their contextual political environment affect the way in which research projects balance their concern in regard to the practical utility and the theoretical relevancy of their results. However, institutional decisions ultimately are the decisions of individuals. Therefore, researchers' values and their sense of social responsibility are factors that affect the capacity for research results to have practical impact on social reality.

It is important to emphasize, that despite their low practical utility the three projects under consideration were successful in making "social reality explicit" (Taylor, 1983a). As it was pointed out before, social science researchers "are in the business of proposing and fashioning ways of looking at, thinking, and talking about -- and hence contributing to the construction and deconstruction of social objects" (Gouldner, 1973, p. 105).

III. Theoretical Relevancy, Practical Utility and Power

The nature and consequences of social science research cannot be understood in isolation from the framework of power relations within which researchers identify research issues, research objectives and methodologies. Power and politics condition the research process from beginning to end. Research also conditions the very power relations within which it takes place. Here it is important to remember the basic premise of this analysis: the main purpose of social science research and theory is to make social reality explicit. By making social reality explicit, social science research and theory have the capacity to shape the same reality that it is trying to explain. We can articulate this in terms that are more relevant to our discussion: the purpose of social science research and theory is to make power relations explicit (for example, by analyzing the political dimension of public policy making; or, by analyzing the content and impact of public policies). By making power relations explicit (identifying public policy consequences, winners and losers, for example), social science research and theory have the potential to reproduce or alter power relations.

The moment we include power as a variable in our discussion of the theoretical relevancy and the practical utility of research projects, we are forced to confront the fact that researchers are components of the very power structures that they study. Therefore, researchers are political beings, in the sense that they have a position, most of the time an informed position, vis-à-vis the power structures within which they operate.[10] For

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[10]In this context, to talk about an informed position is to talk about a personal view of social reality that is not simply constructed within a "common sense" or pre-theoretical perspective.

this reason, the old idea of social scientists operating from neutral and objective positions has been practically discarded from current conceptualizations of the role and nature of social sciences. Values always shape and condition the production of knowledge and the definition of research agendas and priorities.[11]

This takes us again to the problem of theoretical relevancy and practical utility. Researchers want not simply to explain the world, but to have an impact on it. Researchers' decision about the kind and the nature of impact that they want to achieve depends, very often, on their individual perception of the power relations and social reality that they are trying to explain and change.

The IDRC's support to social science research activities in the Southern Cone during the military regimes that dominated the countries of this region during the 1970s and 1980s offers important lessons in regard to the relationship between research results, the state and power structures, as well as about the role of values and social responsibility in the organization of research activities.

The regimes that came to power during this period in the Southern Cone became known as "bureaucratic authoritarian." The characteristics of the bureaucratic authoritarian state are

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[11]The IDRC is not immune to the influence of power structures and values. The changing nature of the IDRC's research agenda is conditioned by the power of dominant values and ideas. The very need to justify the IDRC's work (see IDRC 1997a and IDRC 1997b) is an expression of the role that changing values play in its political context, forcing institutions to adapt to new conceptions of social reality. The high value and prestige attached to the idea of development in the 1960s facilitated the IDRC's work in the promotion of development research. The devaluation of this idea is forcing the IDRC to justify its role in accordance with the values and principles that dominate the public agenda in Canada.

summarized by Skidmore:

> One was the granting of public office to people with highly bureaucratized careers -- to members of the military, the civil service, or large corporations. Second was the political and economic exclusion of the working class and the control of the popular sector. Third was the reduction or near elimination of political activity, especially in the early phases of the regime: problems were defined as technical, not political and they were met with administrative solutions rather than negotiated political settlements. Finally, bureaucratic-authoritarian governments sought to revive economic growth by consolidating ties with international economic forces...(Skidmore, 1997, pp. 57-58)

The depolitization of public life pursued by the military regimes of the Southern Cone in the 1970s and 1980s was especially apparent in the intellectual and academic realms. Universities were occupied by the military regimes, faculties were "purified" and academic and research programs, especially in the social sciences, were eliminated or radically changed to conform to the requirements of the new system. Fortunately, many researchers decided to stay and organize what came to be known as Centros Académicos Independientes (CAIs). From these centres, academic and researchers were able to operate as an "intelectualidad disidente" and maintain a "cultura opositora" (Brunner and Barrios, 1987, pp. 147-160) that worked against the structure of power relations established by the bureaucratic authoritarian states.

The possibility for the CAIs to survive within a highly repressive environment was to a large extent made possible by the support received by the CAIs from donor agencies such as the IDRC, the Ford, Tinker and Rockefeller Foundations and the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation (SAREC).

Among these institutions the IDRC was highly regarded in the Southern Cone because of its ability to understand the necessity

to maintain and develop the intellectual critical capacity within these countries, to counterbalance the power of the regimes and to articulate visions for the future of these societies.

It is important to understand that most researchers supported by the IDRC in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil during the military regimes had the intellectual capacity and the skills to produce research results that could have practical application and utility within the policy process of the military government. Many of them, however, decided not to pursue this avenue. They opted for theoretical relevancy and critical knowledge at the expense of practical utility and visible policy impact. Thanks to that courageous decision, today these countries have the intellectual resources to promote and consolidate more humane and decent political systems.

In Chile the group of intellectuals and economists popularly known as the Chicago Boys found themselves in a completely different position. They were in basic agreement with the new power relations established by the Pinochet regime, and for that reason they were able to produce research results that had direct, material and practical utility within the policy process of the military regime. However, other researchers such as Alejandro Foxley[12] adopted a critical position vis-à-vis the Pinochet regime and more specifically in regard to its economic policies. Adopting this critical position meant not only eliminating the possibilities of producing research that could be used in the formulation of the neo-conservative policies of the government, but also risking his personal safety. These are dramatic but real decisions that have formed part of the history

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[12] Alejandro Foxley is one of the most respected economists of Latin America, a senior politician and the former Minister of Finance of the first transition government of Chile after the of Pinochet in 1989.

of research in Latin America and the IDRC. To illustrate this point, I quote at length from the introduction of a book written by Alejandro Foxley. The book contains the results of a research project supported partially by the IDRC. In the introduction the author states:

> This book represents an effort to understand the nature and effects of the new type of radical economic orthodoxy that has been espoused by authoritarian governments in Latin America during the sixties and seventies. These economic experiments continue to be applied during the early eighties in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and, to a lesser extent, in Brazil.
>
> These experiments are carried on in the context of deep revolutionary change in a neoconservative and strongly authoritarian direction. As such, they have a deep impact in society. Radical economic changes and political repression go hand in hand. Thus, it is not easy to totally dissociate economic performance from prevailing political conditions. The task is particularly difficult when one has been and is a close witness to these changes.
>
> Because of this, the reader deserves a word of warning about where the author stands. As a human being and as an economist I profess some beliefs that I cannot pretend are absent from what follows. These are deep commitments to democratic values and institutions and a marked preference for a more rather than a less egalitarian society. It is not surprising then that I take a critical view of current neoconservative, authoritarian experiences.
>
> Having said this, I must add that I have made a serious effort to undertake an objective, scholarly appraisal of these neoconservative experiments. Obviously, the reader will be the final judge of whether or not I have succeeded, but it is important to stress that although in evaluating economic policies one should judge them on their own merits, it is also true that their overall impact on the economy and on society cannot be ignored (Foxley, 1983, pp. xiii-xiv).

The three case studies reviewed in this document further illustrate the points made by Foxley. In the Argentinean case, the researchers were concerned with theoretical relevancy and practical utility. Practical utility and visible policy impact,

however, were not the independent variable in their decision to formulate and organize this project. That is to say, the central question that they asked themselves as researchers was not: "how to achieve policy impact through this project". Their question was more complex and included an attempt to understand the nature of public policy making to identify ways of contributing to the democratization of that process. Democracy, however, is a contested concept and system. Different value frameworks generate different interpretations of democracy. In the particular case of the Argentinean project, researchers generated a critical assessment of public policy making in Argentina and formulated theoretical guidelines to enhance its democratization.

The consolidation of neo-liberal policies and governments throughout Latin America in general and in Argentina in particular widened the gap between the project's recommendations and the objectives and modus operandi of the Menen regime. In other words, the consolidation of a neo-liberal perspective on the role of the state and on the nature of public policies changed the balance between theoretical relevancy and practical utility built into the design, organization, implementation and expectations of this project.

In the case of Costa Rica, the researchers were also interested in both theoretical relevancy and practical utility. They wanted to contribute to the development of several communities' capacity to shape policy within the complex decision making process of a country undergoing a radical transition. In the mid-1980s the outcome of this transition was unpredictable. Revolutionary ideologies and movements were still strong throughout Latin America. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War dramatically changed the possibilities for revolutionary change in Latin America and the Third World. This profound contextual change had direct implications on the

possibilities for popular organizations to change the nature of the social, political and economic structures within which they operate; it also had a direct effect on the possibilities for practical and progressive research like the one conducted by the Costa Rican team to have a visible impact on the nature of social reality.

In the case of Cuba the options were simple. The Cuban system offered a vehicle to synchronize research activities with policy making. This vehicle was clear, official and well rewarded. What happens, however, when researchers believe that the theoretical relevancy of their work is compromised by the offer of policy impact, safety and benefits? In this particular case, the researchers' answer was unambiguous: they tried to the best of their ability to change the system without compromising their basic intellectual honesty. When they could not do it, they opted for theoretical relevancy, and consequently, for less practical utility and visibility.

It is important to notice, however, that the original design and organization of this project responded to an explicit desire on the part of the Cuban researchers and CEA to shape the policy making process within government. As explained above, the national context within which the project originated provided researchers with an unique opportunity to participate in the political decision making process of the country. These conditions changed with the intensification of the economic and political crisis of Cuba and the increasing hostility of the United States over the last five years.

To summarize this section, discussions about the practical utility and theoretical relevancy of research results must take into consideration the fact that research takes place within structures of power relations. The fact that social theory and social research have the capacity not simply to explain but also

to affect these power structures makes it essential for institutions like the IDRC to understand that researchers have some degree of social and moral responsibility in regard to the relationship between their intellectual work and the power structures that they analyze. Research can be used to either reproduce and legitimize, or criticize and change the nature of these structures. Researchers' personal position vis-à-vis the social context within which they operate condition the balance between practical utility and theoretical relevancy that each project builds in its original design.

IV. Globalization, Power Structures and Research.

The national power structures that have been discussed so far in this report are being increasingly conditioned by global forces. This is to say, national power structures operate within global power relations that condition and influence domestic processes, including policy processes, political processes, economic processes and research processes.

The increasing predominance of global structures is precisely the phenomenon captured by the concept of globalization. This phenomenon must be taken into consideration to make sense of the complex relationship between research and power and between theoretical relevancy and practical utility in the modern world.[13]

The power of global forces and the emergence of transnational normative frameworks that condition domestic processes have a direct effect on the research processes and

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[13]The concept of globalization refers to "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (Giddens, 1990, p. 64; see also Albrow, 1997 and Offe, 1996).

activities that the IDRC supports in Latin America and the Third World. By conditioning the role of the state and power relations at the national level, the phenomenon of globalization limits and conditions the policy agenda of governments and their priorities. In turn, this has a direct effect on the research agenda and priorities of researchers and research institutions as well as on the whole issue of the practical utility and theoretical relevancy of research discussed in previous sections.

The power of global organizations is reproduced by state institutions at the national level and expressed in the creation of research agendas and priorities within which social knowledge is produced. In this context, researchers will have to face the increasingly limited space that global integration is leaving for critical social science policy research.

Often it is assumed that researchers who opt to work outside the limits of established political and policy frameworks do so because they are unable to deal "with the real world" or because they cannot be "practical" and "concrete." Many half humorous and unfair images of Latin American social scientists express these assumptions. However, this representation of critical social scientists is a misconception. Often researchers opt out of the instrumental study of reality simply because it is essential (as the history of political and social thought in the Western World has shown) that reality and "the real world" is studied from different levels of analysis and from different political and theoretical perspectives. By moving away from the practical and the immediate, researchers might be sacrificing direct, immediate and concrete forms of impact. However, they might be trying to achieve theoretical relevancy which is another way of impacting on reality.

Researchers in the region must take into consideration the reality of globalization. However, to take globalization into

consideration is not the same as accepting the premises of global capital to organize and design research activities. To understand the constraints on the implementation of policy systems within which researchers operate does not mean acceptance of the principles and normative values that guide the operation of those systems.

Globalization and the increasing power of financial transnational organizations have generated the conditions for the establishment of global frameworks of political and policy possibilities and limitations that affect the role of governments, reducing the space for political action and certainly affecting the role and nature of social science research. More and more, the normative frameworks generated by transnational financial organizations condition the role of the state and the research agenda of Latin American countries.[14]

In this sense it is important to point to a trend identified by researchers throughout the region: the tendency for social science researchers to work as government consultants, very often with the support of transnational financial organizations. This tendency has been pointed out by students of the evolution of social sciences research in Latin America:

> In some instances, economic pressure [in Latin America] has led to distortions in the social science agenda, obliging researchers to accept consultancies with government agencies or to engage in "action-oriented" projects. Intense competition for scarce resources has discouraged collaborative work. Social scientists have often become *empresarios* instead of researchers. And

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[14]This has serious implications for the development of relevant social science knowledge in the different countries of the region. While globalization generates homogeneous economic and to some extent political trends, it does not generate a homogeneous impact on the social conditions of different societies. Therefore, the promotion of nationally relevant social science research continues to be essential.

> there is a premium on journalism and campaign advising, usually on the basis of short-run polls, instead of the long-term focus that is essential to scholarly research (Smith, 1995, p. 20).

The implications of this trend can be dramatic. Research was always conditioned by the agenda and priorities of donor agencies. However, at least in the experience of the IDRC, researchers were always given ample opportunities to identify their research problems and issues according to their own perception of their national and regional priorities, needs and demands. The IDRC also provided researchers, through extensive and permanent process of consultations, with the opportunity to shape the IDRC's internal agenda.

Most researchers argue that a more congruent relationship between financial transnational agencies, donor agencies and governments is emerging. In the opinion of many Latin American researchers that I have interviewed over the last three years, IDRC has been able to escape this trend.[15] The result is the reduction of the freedom for researchers to question established government practices and policies.

This has certainly created a more instrumental and pragmatic research agenda throughout the continent. While this agenda might increase the *practical utility* of social science research, it does nothing to secure its *theoretical relevancy*

V. Implications for the IDRC

The above discussion has direct implications for the IDRC's attempt to understand the impact of its work over the past 25

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[15]I am making reference to interviews and conversations that I have had with researchers within the context of, the "Impact Assessment of the IDRC Public Goods and Policy Projects initiative"; the "Central América Baseline Study" (3-P-85-8758); and my personal research activities.

years. First, we identified and analyzed the two fundamental functions and objectives of social science research: to *explain* and *change* the nature of social reality. This distinction allowed us to establish the value and implications of social science research in terms of *theoretical relevancy* and *practical utility*.

Theoretical relevancy we argued is a function of the intellectual and scientific capacity of researchers. Therefore, it is a dimension of social science research that the IDRC can assess by carefully considering the research and intellectual record of the researchers with whom it discusses and negotiates projects. Peer review is another method that can be used by the IDRC to establish the intellectual value of social science research results.

Practical utility is a more complex issue to assess. The potential practical utility of a social science project is certainly affected by the scientific merit of its design, methodology, arguments, analysis and conclusions. However, the quality of research results is not the only, nor the most important criterion to determine the potential utility of social science research projects. The social structures and processes that social science knowledge tries to affect are power structures. Power, then, is a key variable in determining the possibilities for research to have an effect on the nature of social reality. This is particularly important for policy-oriented social science research, where the state is in many ways the target of research projects' attempt to change reality.

Different power structures, ideologies, and forms of government produce different frameworks of political and policy limitations and possibilities. Researchers always confront the need to decide their position vis-à-vis these political and policy frameworks. These are moral, ethical and political decisions. They involve an element of personal and social

responsibility.

In other words, theoretical relevancy is based on the capacity for research results to make social reality explicit and to propose ways of improving social life and social conditions. Practical utility, on the other hand, is based on the capacity for research to have an immediate, direct and visible effect on social reality. Both theoretical relevancy and practical utility are conditioned by research quality. However, it is important for the IDRC to understand that not all theoretically relevant research is applicable or practical because very often it is critical of the political structures and processes that determine its "usefulness" or "applicability." Moreover, not all "practical" research is good research because very often the measure of "practical utility" and "applicability" is not "truth" but "convenience." This does not mean that theoretical relevancy and practical utility are mutually exclusive. It is simply to point out that practical utility per se is only a partial criterion to assess social science research results.

Practical utility and theoretical relevancy are not mutually exclusive. Practical utility is the objective of most relevant social science research. However, for the researcher predominantly concerned with theoretical relevancy, practical utility will not be his/her main goal. As it has been indicated already, the pursuit of theoretical relevancy does not preclude the intention and desire to have an impact on the nature of social reality. However, certain types of research and certain approaches to research are more congruent than others with the needs of existing power structures like the state.

The IDRC's search for new ways of assessing social science research impact cannot avoid confronting the issue of politics, power and social responsibility. It cannot avoid maintaining the necessary boundaries between consultancy and research; it cannot

avoid assuming the risks that the production of relevant knowledge always involves; and it cannot avoid promoting a pluralist and democratic intellectual climate in Latin America, precisely at a time when these societies are trying to overcome their authoritarian past. Finally, the IDRC cannot ignore the most fundamental consequence of social knowledge. Social knowledge and research results are, in the words of Charles Taylor, "constitutive of social reality." Social reality from this perspective does not exist independently from our explanations and interpretations of the world around us. The process whereby social knowledge creates social reality is mediated by power and values. This is why the IDRC's conceptual and operational definition of "research impact" should be enlarged to take into consideration the complex nature of the relationship between social science research and social reality. In other words, the concept of impact should be defined by the IDRC as the capacity for social science research to produce theoretically relevant and/or useful results.

In operational terms, this could be translated into the allocation of a percentage of the budget used by the IDRC to support social science research for projects that attempt to generate relevant results, even if the practical utility of these results is low. This type of support is compatible with the IDRC's mission to support research for development purposes. The generation of relevant social science research results is an important way of contributing to the definition and promotion of development.

PROJECT SYNOPSES

POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND PUBLIC POLICY IN ARGENTINA
3-P-87-0313

RECIPIENT INSTITUTION:
Centro Latinoamericano para el Análisis de la Democracia (CLADE). Buenos Aires, Argentina.

IDRC FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION:
CAD$ 82,720.00 (18 MONTHS)

OUTPUTS:

a) José Nun and Mario Lattuada, El Gobierno de Alfonsín y las Corporaciones Agrarias. Buenos Aires: Manantial, 1991. Sections of this book were included in Julio Cotler, Sectores Populares en Argentina. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1995.

b) Hector Maceira and Oscar Grillo, La Concertación Social en las Provincias de Córdoba y de Rio Negro. Buenos Aires: CLADE, 1989.

PROJECT REACH:

El libro El Gobierno de Alfonsín y las Corporaciones Agrarias by José Nun and Mario Lattuada was read by President Alfonsín himself and by his Secretary of Agriculture Lucio Reca. The analysis of PRONAGRO generated an important debate in which researchers and policy makers involved in this case had an opportunity to argue and discuss general and specific dimensions of the policy making process within the Argentinean government. The same kind of response was generated by the analysis of the

political dimension of industrial policy and in the development of the pharmaceutical industry written by Mario Lattuada and Oscar Grillo. The work of Hector Maceira and Oscar Grillo (La Concertación Social en las Provincias de Córdoba y de Rio Negro. Buenos Aires: CLADE, 1989) generated heated discussions in the provinces of Córdoba and Rio Negro. This work proposed the creation of regional consensuses as a way of breaking the impasse reached in Argentina as a result of the inability of the national government to articulate some basic form of national consensus about the relationship between the state, the economy and society. Other organizations reached by this project are: The Sociedad Rural Argentina, the Federación Agraria Argentina, The Confederaciones Rurales Argentinas, the Confederación Intercorporativa Agropecuaria, the Unión Industrial Argentina, the Consejo Argentino de la Industria, the Confederación General de la Industria, the Programa Nacional Agropecuario, la Comisión de Concertación Política Lechera and the Fondo de Promoción de la Actividad Lechera.

Academically, the analysis generated was reproduced not only in Argentina but also throughout the Latin American region (see Julio Cotler, Sectores Populares en Argentina. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos). In a recent meeting in Central America, I found that the basic conceptual approach articulated by Nun is being used (with necessary variations) to study the obstacles to democratic consolidation in Central America.

The sections of the book by José Nun and Mario Lattuada have been widely used as "case studies" in different courses, seminars and graduate public policy programs conducted in Argentina by people like Oscar Ozslak, Jorge Schvarzer and Carlos Acuna. Moreover, the article by Mario Lattuada has become an obligatory point of reference to study the process of economic policy making during the Alfonsín government. The work of Mario Lattuada and

Oscar Grillo quickly became text books and works of reference in several university courses.

PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC POLICY IN COSTA RICA
3-P-87-1053

RECIPIENT INSTITUTION:
Centro de Estudics para la Acción Social (CEPAS)

IDRC FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION:
CAD$ 26,068 (This does not include coordination costs)

OUTPUTS:

a) Eugenia Molina, Participación y Democracia Popular en los Comités de Lucha por Vivienda en Costa Rica. San José: Centro de Estudios para la Acción Social, 1991.

b) Silvia Lara and Eugenia Molina. "Participation and Development in Cuban Municipalities", in Michael Kaufman and Haroldo Dilla Alfonso, Community Power and Grassroots Democracy. London and Ottawa: Zed Books and IDRC, 1997;

c) Two presentations to participants of the "Summer Institute" organized by the IDRC in San José, in 1992 and 1993.

PROJECT REACH:

Community organizations in La Guarari (600 families); Barrio Carmen Lyra (600 families); Barrio Oscar Felipe (300 families); and, El Nazareno (100 families).

The work of CEPAS was oriented towards the generation of practical knowledge that community organizations could use in

their political efforts to influence housing policies in Costa Rica. As it was indicated before, this research institution was predominantly concerned with the development of information and analysis that the housing committees could use to enhance their political power. This information and analysis was disseminated in informal ways in meetings and discussions with community leaders. The emphasis of the project was on action rather than on the production of written results. The implementation of the project was designed to gather information and analysis that could be used politically by the housing committees in their everyday struggles. One could say that in this project, the research process was at least as important as the production of conventional research outputs. It is important to mention that the researchers' involvement with the community of El Nazareno went on for two years after the official end of the project.

PARTICIPATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN CUBA
3-P-87-01053

RECIPIENT INSTITUTION:
Centro de Estudios de las Américas (CEA).

IDRC CONTRIBUTION:
CAD $ 45, 220. 00 (This amount does not include coordination costs).

OUTPUTS:
Haroldo Dilla and Gerardo González, Participación Popular y Desarrollo en los Municipios Cubanos. La Habana: Centro de Estudios sobre América y Editora Política, 1993. Three thousand copies of this book were sold. A second edition of this book was published in Caracas, Venezuela, by Editorial Tropykos.

Articles by Haroldo Dilla and Gerardo González appeared in Haroldo Dilla, ed., La Democracia en Cuba y el Diferendo con Estados Unidos. La Habana: Centro de Estudios sobre America, 1995 and 1996; Haroldo Dilla, ed., La Participación Popular en Cuba y los Retos del Futuro. La Habana: Centro de Estudios sobre America, 1996; Michael Kaufman and Haroldo Dilla, Communitary Development and Grassroots Participation: London and Ottawa: Zed Books and the International Development Research Centre, 1997.

Eight articles in academic journals.

One national workshop and six local workshops to discuss the project's result with a total participation of 228 people.

19 presentations made by the project's researchers in national events.

Presentations in several Canadian, American, Latin American and European universities including York University, Harvard University, Stanford, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México y Complutense de Madrid.

In the political and policy arena: Four reports presented to the National Parliament, a report to a special commission in charge of formulating a new electoral law, and reports to a special commission in charge of reorganizing the municipal government system of Cuba. In this case, the CEA research team directed a group of advisors to collaborate with the National Parliament.

PROJECT REACH:

Policy makers and politicians in Cuba.

Community organizations in Centro Habana, Bayamo, Santa Cruz del Norte y Chambas.

Academics and intellectuals in Cuba, Canada, the United States, Europe and Latin America.

The Cuban project was designed to facilitate the establishment of a permanent line of communication between researchers, their analysis, local authorities and local communities. During the first phase of their project, they were successful in maintaining

this line of communication and in influencing the decision making process at the level of the local state in the communities under study until political conditions in Cuba provoked the closing of the CEA.

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---c "Proposal for the Design of an Experimental Research Program on Representative Institutions, Participatory Processes and Public Policy," Social Science Division, 1986.

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DETERMINACION DEL IMPACTO DE LA INVESTIGACION
CUESTIONARIO

PRIMERA PARTE: LA EXPERIENCIA DEL PROYECTO:

1) Por favor describa la racionalidad, objetivos y estrategia operativa de este proyecto.

2) Identifique los productos directos e indirectos de este proyecto (libros, artículos académicos, artículos periodísticos, material educativo, conferencias, presentaciones, etc.). Por favor indique con claridad títulos, fechas y otras referencias).

3) Identifique y explique los factores mas importantes que incidieron en el diseño y ejecución de este proyecto.

   Recursos propios
   Recursos del IDRC
   Condiciones socio-políticas
   Condiciones institucionales
   Otros

4) ¿Quiénes participaron en el diseño y ejecución de este proyecto?

5) Identifique y explique los resultados e impactos esperados de este proyecto al momento de su diseño y desarrollo. Los siguientes son algunos resultados e impactos típicos esperados:

   Desarrollo institucional
   Contribución a las ciencias sociales
   Impacto en el proceso de formulación de políticas públicas
   Impacto en en desarrollo de la capacidad política de determinados actores en los procesos de formulación de políticas públicas
   Impacto en la opinión pública
   Impacto en el debate político nacional
   Otros

6) Identifique aquellos resultados e impactos que se consideraban como los más importantes durante el diseño y ejecución de este proyecto. Por favor explique su respuesta.

7) Por favor, identifique y explique los resultados e impactos <u>reales</u> de este proyecto durante su ejecución y despues de su terminación. Los siguientes son algunos de los resultados e impactos típicos reales de proyectos como el estudiado:

Desarrollo institucional
Contribución a las ciencias sociales
Impacto en el proceso de formulación de políticas públicas
Impacto en en desarrollo de la capacidad política de determinados actores en los procesos de formulación de políticas públicas
Impacto en la opinión pública
Impacto en el debate político nacional
Otros

Por favor identifique y señale evidencias que apoyen su respuesta, incluyendo opiniones y puntos de vista de personas que conocen el alcance de los resultados de este proyecto.

8) En relación a la pregunta 7: ¿cuáles son lo resultados e impactos reales mas importantes derivados de este proyecto? Por favor incluya sus puntos de vista así como los puntos de vista de otras personas conocedoras de los alcances de este proyecto.

9) ¿Que factores condicionaron los resultados e impactos reales de este proyecto? Por favor incluya sus puntos de vista así como los puntos de vista de otras personas conocedoras de los alcances de este proyecto. Identifique factores facilitadores y factores-obstaculos.

10) ¿Quiénes fueron afectados positiva o negativamente por este proyecto? Por favor incluya sus puntos de vista así como los puntos de vista de otras personas conocedoras de los alcances de este proyecto.

11) ¿En que medida influyó el IDRC la racionalidad, los objetivos y la estrategia operativa de este proyecto? ¿Hasta que punto fueron esta racionalidad, objetivos, estrategias condicionados por las prioridades del IDRC?

12) ¿Que lecciones se desprenden de este proyecto que puedan ser de utilidad para mejorar: a) la calidad de la investigación en el campo de la ciencias sociales; b) el impacto de la investigación en el campo de las ciencias sociales; y c) el trabajo del IDRC como agencia de apoyo a la investigación en el campo de las ciencias sociales?

SEGUNDA PARTE: CONSIDERACIONES GENERALES SOBRE EL IMPACTO DE LA INVESTIGACION EN EL CAMPO DE LAS CIENCIAS SOCIALES

1) La relación entre investigación teórica y aplicada en el campo de las ciencias sociales es una relación compleja. Algunos investigadores tratan de balancear estas dos dimensiones. Otros enfatizan una de ellas. En su opinión, deberian instituciones como el IDRC apoyar tanto la investigación teórica como la aplicada en el campo de las ciencias sociales? ¿Unicamente la aplicada? Por favor explique su respuesta.

2) Que criterios deberían utilizar instituciones como el IDRC para determinar los beneficios que se derivan de la investigacion teórica?

3) Que criterios deberían utilizar instituciones como el IDRC para determinar los beneficios que se derivan de la investigacion aplicada?

4) Algunos estudiosos del papel de las ciencias sociales argumentan que el papel fundamental de éstas es hacer explícita la realidad social. Al hacer la realidad social explícita, las ciencias sociales contribuyen a transformar la realidad social. En que medida se relaciona este argumento con la experiencia del proyecto_____.

5) Se puede argumentar que la globalización afecta el peso y la relacion entre los factores domésticos y externos que condicionan los procesos de formulación de políticas públicas en América Latina. ¿En que medida afecta esto la capacidad de la ciencias sociales de la región para influenciar la acción del Estado y de las instituciones sociales?

6) ¿Cuál es en su opinión el papel que estan jugando instituciones como el IDRC en la determinación del balance entre los factores domésticos y externos que condicionan los procesos de formulación de políticas públicas en América Latina?

7) Por favor caracterize el impacto general que ha tenido el apoyo de instituciones como el IDRC en el desarrollo de las ciencias sociales en América Latina/su propio país? ¿Cuáles son las grandes lecciones que pueden derivarse de esta experiencia?

Centre File: 02287 / 94-0821

TERMS OF REFERENCE
Impact Assessment of IDRC Public Goods and Policy Projects
Case Study Consultancy

1. BACKGROUND OF THE IMPACT STUDY

1.1 Since its inception in the late 1960s, IDRC has supported over 5000 research activities throughout the developing world. While the Centre has invested considerable resources in evaluating this work, it has not specifically undertaken any analyses of the impacts realized by the projects and initiatives it has funded. There is a need now for the Centre to extend its understanding of the influence its development research activities have had over the past 25 years.

1.2 A number of purposes underlie the Centre's interest in understanding the nature and range of impacts of the research it supports: to explore the ways in which research contributes to national social and economic development and the factors which facilitate or impede its impact; to know better the kinds of influences it is having on the development agenda and research capacity of developing countries; to use this accumulating knowledge to improve its own practice; and to inform its international partners and the Canadian public of the importance and quality of this kind of development intervention.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE IMPACT STUDY

2.1 The aim of the Centre's overall impact assessment study is to analyse the results of IDRC's investments in research and researchers over the years in terms of the impact they have had on the development process. It aims to deepen understanding of how development research, as supported by the Centre, has contributed to making a difference in people's lives and, from that, to enable the Centre to fulfil more efficiently its role as a development organization and knowledge broker.

2.2 In realizing this very broad goal, the Centre's Evaluation Unit is undertaking a number of initiatives aimed at exploring the range of ways impacts might be realized, for whom, and the factors which influence their realization and reach -- positively and negatively. Sets of case studies are being developed to look at different types of Centre-funded projects, in different regions and sectors and with specific kinds of outputs, such as: commercializable products and services; information and communications technologies; public goods/quality of life contributions; and policy development.

2.3 The activity referred to in the present TORs involves the development, implementation and synthesis of case studies of projects in all IDRC regions, covering each of its main disciplinary sectors, and focussing only on the last two types of outcomes -- public

goods/quality of life and policy development. The aim is NOT to evaluate the projects selected as case studies, but rather to use those experiences as a concrete basis on which to explore the nature of "research impacts" and the factors which influence them.

2.4 Specifically, the objectives of the case studies are:

2.4.1 to document and analyse the outputs, reach and impact[1] of Centre projects which have aimed at public goods/quality of life and policy development results;

2.4.2 to identify factors in the context, design and implementation of these projects which have influenced the types of impacts realized and facilitated or impeded their range and quality;

2.4.3 to synthesize across the cases generalizable characteristics of the impacts of IDRC-supported research activities and factors which influenced them;

2.4.4 from this synthesis, to generate recommendations for improving the development and management of research projects toward realizing more and better impacts more effectively;

2.4.5 to develop a user-friendly framework for assessing and fostering the impact of development research; and

2.4.6 to identify and document those cases which might provide material for IDRC's public information strategies.

3. PURPOSE OF THE CONSULTANCY

3.1 Co-ordination of this project will be managed by Dr. Anne Bernard and Tricia Wind in Ottawa, Canada. The case studies will be conducted in the regions by researchers as much as possible contracted regionally. Each consultant will be oriented to the project by the project Co-ordinator (or staff of the Evaluation Unit) and report to the Co-ordinator.

3.2 The consultant will be responsible for the overall development and implementation of three case studies so as to provide a coherent, well-documented and competent analysis of the nature and scope of impacts realized by the projects under review (see section 3.3 for details). Again, the objective of the analysis is not to evaluate the project as such, but rather to identify, track and assess the kinds of impacts it has had, explore whether it could have had more or larger impacts, and why. The consultant will then use those 3

[1] see definition of these terms in the attached Concept Paper

case studies to prepare a synthesis document, analysing across the three to discuss the nature of impacts of development research, and factors which affect those impacts.

3.3 The three projects that will serve as case studies will be ***Representative Institutions and Public Policies (Argentina), Participación Popular y Desarrollo (Cuba), and Participación y el Gobierno Local (Chile).*** These were projects within IDRC's Participation and Public Policy program.

The projects were chosen because of their focus on the public policy process. Other cases in this study examine how sector-specific research affects policy, but these projects tackle policy-impact in a different way. This raises questions to what extent could the research have an impact in numerous policy contexts, or what different types of impact result from this direct discussion on policy process instead of (or in some cases, in addition to) policy substance.

Moreover, the extent to which these Participation and Public Policy projects were conceived as a set raises questions. To what extent did the projects form a network? Did relations among the projects influence the types or degrees of impact that each had? Were there other impacts that relate more to the set of projects than to individual projects within the set?

Having three projects from the PPP set also provides an opportunity to see how the impacts of thematically-related research differ in the different environments (research, institutional, political, social and other environments) of three countries. This study could allow an exploration of how contexts affect impact, given relatively similar "inputs" (financial, intellectual, time, management or other) from IDRC.

4. TASKS OF THE CONSULTANT

More specifically, the tasks of the consultant will be the following:

4.1 Using the analytical framework and definitions included in the attached Concept Paper and Framework, design an interactive questionnaire for the purpose of:

a) documenting and analysing the outputs, reach and impacts of three Participation and Public Policy Projects;
b) identifying factors in the context, design and implementation of these projects which have influenced the types of impacts realized and facilitated or impeded their range and quality; and
c) producing a coherent, competent and well-documented analytical exploration of the impacts of development research.

This questionnaire will be designed so as to require the researchers to seek data both from within the context (institutions, contact communities) of the projects *and* from the broader community of actual and potential users of the research products, and those who may have been influenced (positively or negatively) by its process.

4.2 Identify and sub-contract a researcher from each of the three selected projects to answer the questionnaire.

4.3 Supervise the completion of the questionnaire by regular phone/fax/email conversations and feedback.

4.4 Carry out some primary data collection through telephone interviews with key resource people and literature reviews.

4.5 As appropriate, and as agreed by IDRC, format questionnaire data as three mini case studies.

4.6 Prepare a 25-30 page synthesis and analysis of the three case studies organized according to the following themes (see also Annex 1 for guides on report format):

- The national and international contexts of the projects; the projects' central issues and problems; the nature and characteristics of the research institution/team;
- The research context within IDRC;
- The objectives, strategies and inputs of the projects;
- Planned and unplanned outputs;
- Projects' reach;
- Projects' impact (at the national level and within IDRC);
- Factors that influenced those impacts;
- Analysis of the meaning, range and implications of the concept of "impact" within the context of research on policy processes; and
- Recommendations for impact evaluation in social science research projects.

5. TIME FRAME and SCHEDULE

5.1 The cases to be undertaken under the terms of this contract will be completed, up to submission of the first drafts of the case study between signing of the contract and November 1, 1997 and may require up to a total of up to 2 days' field work in Montreal, Québec, up to 2 days' fieldwork in Notre Dame, Indiana, and up to 5 days' fieldwork days in Cuba. Following review by the Co-ordinator, the final reports will be submitted by the Termination date of the contract: November 15, 1997.